

‘Putting Words on the Backs of Rhythm’: Woolf, ‘Street Music’, and *The Voyage Out*¹

EMMA SUTTON

Abstract:

This essay explores Virginia Woolf’s representation of rhythm in two early texts — her neglected 1905 essay ‘Street Music’ and her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915). It teases out the texts’ characterisations of musical, literary, bodily and urban rhythms, considering their implications for a theory of literary rhythm more broadly. Arguing that rhythm has a central place in Woolf’s writing practice, prose style and theories of writing, the essay charts the relationship between rhythm, individuality and literary value in these texts, and in selected correspondence, diary extracts, essays and fiction.

Keywords: rhythm, Virginia Woolf, ‘Street Music’, *The Voyage Out*, literary-musical relations, primitivism

As for the mot juste, you are quite wrong. Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm. Once you get that, you can’t use the wrong words. But on the other hand here am I sitting after half the morning, crammed with ideas, and visions, and so on, and can’t dislodge them, for lack of the right rhythm. Now this is very profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it . . .

Letter to Vita Sackville-West, March 1926.

All writing is nothing but putting words on the backs of rhythm. If they fall off the rhythm one’s done . . .

Letter to Ethel Smyth, April 1931.²

Virginia Woolf’s pithy observation to the composer Ethel Smyth defines ‘writing’ entirely in terms of rhythm. ‘Nothing’ else matters, whether we understand the term ‘writing’ in its most immediate sense as the process of composition or, as Woolf’s phrasing also permits, as a corpus of texts. Here, a writer’s rhythmic sense determines the

success of 'all writing'; it is not only a matter of 'style', as her earlier observations to Sackville-West suggest, but of literary value *in toto*. Her absolute language implies that rhythm's centrality to writing is undeniable, yet the absence of any explanatory detail to Smyth hints too that it is difficult to define with precision. Writing to Sackville-West, Woolf characterises her theory as provisional, acknowledging that to speak of rhythm is both problematic and 'profound': her frequent reaching for metaphor evokes the inadequacy of critical vocabulary to elucidate this aspect of prose.³ These observations centralize but complicate rhythm's role in (her own) writing, exemplifying Woolf's enduring attention to but elusive, sometimes deceptively casual, theoretical conceptions of literary rhythm. Woolf makes the statement to Smyth apparently spontaneously, for example, following an apology for the 'drivvle' [*sic*] of her letter, which she attributes in part to the effects of 'the loudspeaker (...) pouring forth Wagner from Paris.' The German composer's rhythm 'destroys' hers, she tells Smyth, adding, 'yes, that's [*sic*] a true observation.'⁴ So her seemingly impulsive remarks about rhythm are given weight and emphasis by Woolf's claim about the 'truth' of her observations, just as the earlier observations to Vita Sackville-West are both considered and simply a reply to an unanticipated assertion of Vita's.

Woolf's observations appear conversational, but their implications for a theory of rhythm are complex. Woolf's implied metaphor to Smyth is presumably of rhythm as the horse(s) on which 'words', the riders, sit.⁵ Her image characterizes rhythm as animated, purposeful and autonomous; it predates and determines the choice of words 'put' on it, just as, in the letter to Vita, rhythm 'makes words to fit it'. Rhythm is primary whilst words are secondary — fragile and unstable, prone to 'fall[ing] off'. Rhythm, implicitly, has a generative and epistemological force; as Woolf reiterates elsewhere, 'meaning' is not constructed only by 'words'. In these accounts, rhythm precedes the act of 'writing', though whether it is perceived to exist externally or internally, in the writer's creative mind or body, varies in Woolf's accounts. The implied allusion to horses, like that to waves 'break[ing]' and 'tumbl[ing]', does associate rhythm with the natural world (albeit a partially domesticated version of nature), but this is not to say that Woolf's image necessarily suggests a single cosmic rhythm or, indeed, 'natural' rhythms determined by the gender, race or sexuality of the writer. Rather, her unexpected use of the plural ('backs', rather than 'back') suggests that rhythm is varied and multiple: it varies by individual ('[Wagner's] rhythm', 'my rhythm') and by text

(in 1940, she 'br[eaks]' 'up' the 'obsessive' rhythm of one text by reading another).⁶ Successful or 'literary' rhythm is individual, non-uniform, it 'breaks' and 'tumbles', disrupting the apparent sameness of the waves.⁷ Both images suggest the potential, and the necessity, for literary rhythm to unsettle, exceed or otherwise escape the semblance of order and regularity represented by the waves and the riders. The plural also allows the possibility that rhythm may also refer to culturally specific, historically determined, rather than natural rhythms—the diverse rhythmic and metrical conventions of literature or music, for example.⁸ Thus, although the equine and sea images unequivocally associate rhythm with the natural world, Woolf variously imagines rhythm as natural or corporeal, aesthetic and historically specific, or both. The very possibility that rhythm may escape the control of its rider evokes its resistance to definition.

These two epigraphs exemplify the complexity of Woolf's conceptions of rhythm, which occupies a privileged place in her prose style, writing practice, and theories of writing. Accounts of Woolf drafting her prose aloud as she walked are well known⁹ and many have noted the distinctive rhythms of Woolf's prose, particularly the late fiction, though the term itself has rarely been explored in detail.¹⁰ And the fiction itself frequently explores the properties and effects of musical, urban and spoken rhythms—the waltz to which Sara listens in the 1907 section of *The Years* (1937) and the disjointed colloquial speech of *Between the Acts* (1941) are obvious examples. Feminist readings of the rhythms of Woolf's prose have recently been augmented by scholarship on her representations of the voice and acoustic experience more generally, and by the influence of musical forms on her fiction;¹¹ to many, Woolf's own prose anticipates, and is a productive site for encounters with, the theoretical turn to the aural evident in the work of Kristeva, Cixous, Jean-Luc Nancy and others. The 'crise de vers' (crisis in verse) is thus one among a number of discourses and texts shaping Woolf's interest in and theories of rhythm. Though the present essay is not primarily concerned with questions of 'influence', it is probable that Woolf knew of the arguments comprising the 'crise de vers' and possibly Mallarmé's essay specifically. She alluded intermittently to Mallarmé in her letters and essays from the 1920s onwards,¹² and may have read his work in French well before this date. Her remarks in 1920 to Roger Fry about his planned translation of selected poems confirm, for example, that she already knew these texts well¹³ (and when Fry's translations were posthumously published in 1936 she described them

as 'a masterpiece').¹⁴ Her familiarity with Mallarmé's work provides a further context in which to consider Woolf's observations on rhythm, placing her work in relation to late nineteenth-century discourses about rhythm, music and literary meaning or value. Thus, my attention here is not to the influence of specific musical forms or genres on her writing, but to the way Woolf represents the relationship between musical and literary rhythm and deploys the persistent, elusive analogy between music, literature and rhythm.

There has been little critical attention to the representation of rhythm in Woolf's early fiction, even though it was in this period that Woolf published two essays on music and her most explicit theorization of literary and musical rhythm, 'Street Music' (1905). Preceding Woolf's longer and more famous commentaries on contemporary writing (such as 'Modern Novels' (1919), and 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1924)) by some years, 'Street Music' centralizes rhythm in her analysis of prose. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), was begun within three years of this essay and traces the amateur pianist Rachel Vinrace's voyage to South America and her eventual engagement to a novelist, Terence Hewet.¹⁵ I aim here to animate the relations between these two texts: the first, her most extended theorization of rhythm, the second, her first novel which also deals prominently with literary-musical relations. The novel includes many conversations about literary-musical relations and the nature of Art, yet rhythm plays a small part in these discussions. Nonetheless, the text refers repeatedly and conspicuously to different types, effects and uses of rhythm. At the very start of the novel, Woolf employs incompatible affective rhythms to convey the characters' relations and interior lives. Helen Ambrose's distress at leaving her children is exacerbated by her husband's chanting of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842): Macaulay's ballad 'struck close upon her ears', and she finds Ridley's 'quick rhythmic stride' and subsequent self-identification with masculine heroes such as 'a Viking or a stricken Nelson' uncongenial.¹⁶ Her rhythmic weeping and 'fixity of mood' are, however, 'broken by the action of walking' and by the accompanying sounds of 'thundering drays' and 'jingling hansoms' (5). From the opening of the text, and throughout, Woolf suggests that rhythm — poetic, urban or bodily — is constitutive and expressive of subjectivity.¹⁷ Furthermore, prose rhythms, poetic metre and music are contrasted throughout *The Voyage Out*. The present essay has a modest aim: rather than attempting to characterize the rhythm(s) of Woolf's prose in *The Voyage Out*, it offers some preliminary observations on her

representation of metre and rhythm in 'Street Music' and in the novel, teasing out the theoretical implications of her conceptions of rhythm. There is, I will suggest, a sharp contrast between the utopian argument of 'Street Music' and her uneasy representation of literary rhythm in *The Voyage Out*.

Unlike Woolf's essays on art music ('The Opera' and 'Impressions at Bayreuth', both 1909), 'Street Music' examines rhythm explicitly and at some length.¹⁸ The essay's relative neglect is surprising given Woolf's famous later statements about rhythm;¹⁹ possibly, it has been perceived as a period piece partly because the representation of rhythm is, at first glance, resoundingly primitivist. The essay begins with three paragraphs on 'vagrant musician[s]' (27), delineating the 'ecstasy' of an old violinist before criticizing the English 'disfavour' towards musicians and artists more generally, an attitude attributed to a national perception of 'expression of any kind' as 'almost indecent' and 'unmanly' (28). The first-person narrator notes that musicians are 'persecute[d]' (29): 'It is because music incites within us something that is wild and inhuman like itself—a spirit that we would willingly stamp out and forget—that we are distrustful of musicians and loath to put ourselves under their power' (29). The reference to stamping hints that rhythm is this problematic element in music and this implication is expanded as the essay continues. Should the 'pagan gods' exiled under Christianity return, it 'will be the god of music who will breathe madness into our brains, crack the walls of our temples, and drive us in loathing of our rhythmless [*sic*] lives to dance and circle for ever in obedience to his voice' (30). This sentence introduces the explicit discussion, rather than only the evocation, of rhythm, and this subject occupies the remaining half of the essay. The narrator criticizes contemporary music education, which is associated with the feminine domestic accomplishments of flower pressing and piano playing:

The whole of rhythm and harmony have been pressed, like dried flowers, into the neatly divided scales, the tones and semitones of the pianoforte. The safest and easiest attribute of music—its tune—is taught, but rhythm, which is its soul, is allowed to escape like the winged creature it is. (30)

Woolf's image modifies her evocation of the corporeality of rhythm, evoked by dance: now, rhythm has become ethereal, a 'winged creature' and a 'soul'—and thus, in true Mallarmean fashion, endowed with spiritual value which exceeds or escapes that which can be taught or 'neatly divided'. As in her later image of rhythm as horses, rhythm

again escapes definition or theorization. The essay asserts too that the uneducated and 'savages' — 'whose sense of rhythm has never been divorced [*sic*] or made subsidiary to their sense of tune' (30) — are most sensitive to rhythm:

The beat of rhythm in the mind is akin to the beat of the pulse in the body: and thus though many are deaf to tune hardly anyone is so coarsely organised as not to hear the rhythm of its own heart in words and music and movement. It is because it is thus inborn in us that we can never silence music, any more than we can stop our heart from beating; and it is for this reason too that music is so universal and has the strange and illimitable power of a natural force. (30)

Woolf's definition keeps ambivalent possibilities in play: rhythm is everywhere and nowhere, 'universal' yet always escaping, corporeal and 'inborn' yet ethereal and the locus of spiritual value, 'akin to' yet also directly equated with the 'heart' and 'pulse'. Furthermore, if rhythm had seemed the vigorous 'masculine' property of music that escaped feminized amateur domestic music education (or, had rhythm rather been gendered female by its ethereality?), Woolf is now careful to use neutral language in the grammatically awkward phrase 'its own heart'. Rhythm is both male and female (or neither) — perhaps analogous to the androgynous creative mind evoked in *A Room of One's Own* by the 'rhythmical order' of the 'ordinary sight' of a man and a woman getting into a cab?²⁰ Having asserted music's 'power over us' (30), the narrator goes on to consider the 'strange sight' (30) of a room of dancers: 'it may be that some day it will suggest the vast possibilities that lie within the power of rhythm, and the whole of our life will be revolutionised as it was when man first realised the power of steam' (31). The remainder of the essay sketches the social and aesthetic benefits that would result if 'the affairs of daily life' were 'order[ed]' to a 'sense of rhythm' (31). From road rage, Woolf moves to social relations and crime:

a band in the centre of the wild discord of cabs and carriages would be more effectual than any policeman; not only cabman but horse would find himself constrained to keep time in the dance, and to follow whatever measure of trot or canter the trumpets dictated. This principle has been in some degree recognised in the army, where troops are inspired to march into battle to the rhythm of music. (...) Conversation, for instance, would not only obey its proper laws of metre as dictated by our sense of rhythm, but would be inspired by charity, love and wisdom, and ill-temper or sarcasm would sound to the bodily ear as terrible discords and false notes. (...) If, therefore, instead of libraries, philanthropists would bestow free music upon the poor, so that at each street corner the melodies

of Beethoven and Brahms and Mozart could be heard, it is probable that all crime and quarrelling would soon be unknown, and the work of the hand and the thoughts of the mind would flow melodiously in obedience to the laws of music. (31–2)

The essay concludes with the anticipation that ‘our lives would pass from dawn to sunset to the sound of music’ (32).

As these examples suggest, the essay’s apparent celebration of rhythm is substantially qualified by Woolf’s unstable tone, which oscillates between Romantic primitivism and irony. (The editor for whom she wrote the piece described it as a ‘paradox’, and Woolf wrote wryly to her cousin Emma Vaughan, studying music in Dresden, that her essay would ‘revolutionise the whole future of music’).²¹ The essay’s utopian visions of individuals and society reformed by rhythm so that conversations are conducted along the Pauline virtues of ‘charity, love and wisdom’ become steadily more hyperbolic, incongruously Christian, and psychologically and politically naïve. The increasingly bold claims in ‘Street Music’ about rhythm’s socio-political agency are qualified by their overstatement and by the juxtaposition of brief, unsupported examples. Woolf’s allusion to military uses of rhythm also immediately signals the ambivalence of these utopian visions: as she would later do in *The Voyage Out*, Woolf associates military rhythm with patriarchal aggression, undercutting the essay’s apparent argument. The allusions to ‘troops’, ‘cabm[e]n’ and ‘policem[e]n’ hint, perhaps, that stably gendered rhythm that relies on an inflexible binary conception of gender is the antithesis of the ‘literary’ rhythm for which the essay appeals.²² The benevolent social effects of rhythm are further compromised if we recall that the argument and examples of the essay are anticipated in a letter of 1903, in which she described the Stephen family’s experiments in using the pianola as a form of social control:²³

our servants sit beneath the open drawing room window all the evening while we play — and by experiment we have discovered that if we play dance music all their crossnesses [*sic*] vanish and the whole room rings with their shrieks and then we tame them down so sentimentally with Saul or [*sic*] boredom with Schumann — on the whole their silence is the most desirable thing.²⁴

The self-interest knowingly admitted in the letter, as well as the silencing of the animalistic servants, suggest Woolf’s alertness to the class politics embedded in the essay’s similar depiction of rhythm (where ‘the poor’ will be the subjects of rhythmic experimentation).²⁵ All of these factors suggest the essay’s ambivalence towards primitivism

and towards the concept of a single universal rhythm, whether that of the 'heart' and 'pulse' (30) or of nature, whose 'vast pulsation' can be detected in forests (31). The essay is, then, ambivalent about rhythm, which is variously imagined as individualistic, disruptive and ecstatic or as regular, militaristic, and socially coercive. This dialectical model recurs in Woolf's later representations of rhythm, in which 'literary' rhythm is often defined by contrast with its opposite; frequently, 'literary' rhythm is represented as the ideal—in the sense both that it is abstract, resistant to one single definition, and that it is celebrated for its individualism and difference. The essay's variable tone itself signals Woolf's privileging of instability and disruption over the utilitarian, mechanistic conception of regular rhythm.

How, then, are we to read the essay's assertion that literature is the closest art to music, and thus to rhythm? The narrator argues that 'the art of writing' should be reformed by the influence of rhythm (note the proximity, even synonymy, of art and rhythm again). Furthermore, the essay insists that contemporary writing will derive its originality and aesthetic value from rhythm:

And when the sense of rhythm was thoroughly alive in every mind we should if I mistake not, [*sic*] notice a great improvement not only in the ordering of all the affairs of daily life, but also in the art of writing, which is nearly allied to the art of music, and is chiefly degenerate because it has forgotten its allegiance. We should invent—or rather remember—the innumerable metres which we have so long outraged, and which would restore both prose and poetry to the harmonies that the ancients heard and observed. (31)

Woolf's essay has, albeit ironically, elements of a manifesto for modern writing—though it is a vision of modern writing that, like those of many modernists, looks back to nineteenth-century perceptions of music's potential to exceed the expressivity of language.²⁶ 'Street Music' identifies 'music' and 'ancient' metres as the models for modern literary rhythms, and at this point Woolf defines rhythm primarily in relation to aesthetic history and the 'mind' rather than to the 'bodily ear' or cosmic rhythm (though the 'harmony of the spheres' is also evoked in the final phrase). She seems, that is, to be about to supply a more specific definition of rhythm. Yet Woolf avoids explicitly identifying the literary and musical genres, forms, and even cultural or historical contexts of these rhythmic models. Her reference to 'metres' may, in conjunction with the classical allusions in the essay, suggest that she is referring to the sung texts of classical Greek poetry; Woolf was certainly very familiar not only with classical Greek metre

and theories of ‘rhythmopoeia’ or ‘rhythmic composition’ but also with the interdependence of musical and literary rhythms in Greek poetry.²⁷ However, the ‘ancient’ ‘metres’ may suggest Latin or even Hebrew metres to some readers, and it is, in any case, unclear how literally we should — or could — take Woolf’s invitation. In addition to the critical disagreement about the exact sounds of these ancient metres, the great majority of readers, as Woolf knew very well, can have had no precise sense of the sounds and rhythms to which she was alluding.²⁸ How, then, can they ‘remember’ them? These are, for all practical purposes, unheard metres: the rhythms remain, therefore, essentially abstract and metaphorical.²⁹ Rhythm simultaneously defines the literary value of modern(ist) writing—including, presumably, Woolf’s own prose — and evades definition.

In contrast to ‘Street Music’, which asserts the affinity between musical and literary rhythm and looks to music and sung poetic metre to reinvigorate modern writing, *The Voyage Out* sharply contrasts the properties and effects of musical and literary rhythms. Woolf’s numerous representations of characters reading or declaiming poetry and prose establish the problematic effects of poetic metre and literary rhythm more generally. Repeatedly, Woolf depicts the rhythm of canonical literary texts by male authors in extreme terms—as troublingly affective, soporific or as obfuscating meaning. Among the numerous literary allusions, there are several prominent references to Gibbon; St John praises his style and recommends him to the uneducated Rachel. The first extended representation of St John describes him reading the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88); it is, implicitly, the rhythm of Gibbon’s prose, evoked by the rhythmic tapping of his cigarette, by which St John is absorbed:

As he read he knocked the ash automatically, now and again, from his cigarette and turned the page, while a whole procession of splendid sentences entered his capacious brow and went marching through his brain in order. It seemed likely that this process might continue for an hour or more, until the entire regiment had shifted its quarters, had not the door opened (...). (116)

Compare Rachel’s first reading of the text:

Never had any words been so vivid and so beautiful — Arabia Felix — Aethiopia. But those were not more noble than the others, hardy barbarians, forests, and morasses. They seemed to drive roads back to the very beginning of the world, on either side of which the populations of all times and countries stood in

avenues, and by passing down them all knowledge would be hers, and the book of the world turned back to the very first page. Such was her excitement at the possibilities of knowledge now opening before her that she ceased to read (. . .). (196)

The explicitly rhythmic and martial image of a military 'procession' 'marching' as St John reads is inflected in Rachel's hint of colonial expansion where the 'populations of all times and countries st[and] in avenues' as roads are 'drive[n] back' (a reading encouraged by the novel's setting in a fictional South American colonial resort). However, Woolf attributes her characters' differing responses to their ability to 'hear' Gibbon's rhythm. St John is arrested by the sound of Gibbon's prose (the regular beat of marching) whilst Rachel's response is to individual 'words' rather than to repetitive sound — and the words' 'vivid[ness]' which, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, is a term frequently used 'of light or colour', suggests perhaps that Rachel's attention is as much to the words' visual as their aural associations. Woolf emphasizes Rachel's excitement and pleasure at this symbolic introduction to the patriarchal canon — yet, crucially, she stops reading, interrupting or breaking the rhythm of the prose. Whereas Gibbon's rhythm appears tenacious and 'order[ly]' to St John, it has no such power to regulate or sustain Rachel's reading; indeed, she later observes that it 'goes round, round, round, like a roll of oilcloth', though she is 'instantly ashamed of her figure of speech, for she could not explain it in words of sober criticism' (226). Rachel's scathing caricature of Gibbon's rhythm suggests the uncongeniality of his prose style — in *A Room of One's Own*, Gibbon exemplifies the 'man's sentence' 'current at the beginning of the nineteenth century', 'unsuited for a woman's use'.³⁰ The episode records Rachel's pleasure, but also implicitly questions Gibbon's relevance to her and, by extension, to the contemporary woman artist. Rachel may lack critical vocabulary, and rhythm itself resists 'sober criticism', but her ear for rhythm allows her to identify immediately the very features of Gibbon's style by which St John was absorbed. And as we will see when we return to Rachel's musical performance, it is rhythmic regularity and repetition that repel her.

It is in the novel's depictions of poetry, however, that Woolf diverges furthest from the celebration of literary rhythm and metre in 'Street Music.' In the novel, regular poetic metre is repeatedly associated with characters' distress, illness and even death, and this characteristic becomes increasingly marked as Rachel's illness develops.

When Rachel is taken ill with the fever that will kill her, her fiancé Terence is reading *Comus* (1634):

It was too hot to talk, and it was not easy to find any book that would withstand the power of the sun. Many books had been tried and then let fall, and now Terence was reading Milton aloud, because he said the words of Milton had substance and shape, so that it was not necessary to understand what he was saying; one could merely listen to his words; one could almost handle them. (...) The words, in spite of what Terence had said, seemed to be laden with meaning, and perhaps it was for this reason that it was painful to listen to them; they sounded strange; they meant different things from what they usually meant. Rachel at any rate could not keep her attention fixed upon them, but went off upon curious trains of thought suggested by words such as 'curb' and 'Lochrine' and 'Brute', which brought unpleasant sights before her eyes, independently of their meaning. (380–81)

The diegetic declamation of Milton's masque and Terence's invitation to 'merely listen' emphasize the aural aspects of the text and of the characters' experience. Despite their different perceptions of Milton's language, both Terence and Rachel appear to believe that sound, perhaps more specifically rhythm, conveys its own 'meaning'.³¹ Certainly, 'understand[ing]' and value are not dependent on rational comprehension or even semiotic stability (the words 'meant different things'); aesthetic pleasure and comprehension may come by 'merely listen[ing]'—even if 'listen[ing]' has less apparent critical authority than 'understand[ing]'. Rhythmic appreciation differs, this suggests, from the critical or perhaps even the semantic, and the passage implicitly invites us as readers to engage in this alternative form of understanding. This experience is, however, sinister rather than comic and this is due, I would suggest, to the fact that this part of the masque is set to, and is about, music. The passage that Terence quotes is the Attendant Spirit's description of, and the opening lines of his song to, Sabrina; the Spirit is imploring Sabrina's help for the Lady and his successful summoning of the 'gentle nymph' (380) depends on the beauty of his 'warbled song'.³² Woolf quotes and emphasises the stressed imperatives of the song in which the Spirit repeatedly instructs Sabrina to 'listen': 'Sabrina fair, / Listen where thou art sitting', 'Listen for dear honour's sake', 'Listen and save!' (381). The repetition of 'listen' underlines not only the aural but also the musical qualities of Milton's verse, drawing our attention to the fact that this part of the masque is (or could be) sung rather than spoken.³³ This section of the masque is thus not only *about* the affective agency of music

and sung poetry, but also is a form of writing (a 'song') intended to accompany music (written for the first performance by Henry Lawes, the court musician). Its composition and performance are thus intrinsically associated with music, so we might expect that this would be an appealing neo-classical variant of the 'ancient' metres evoked in 'Street Music', an appealing example of musical-literary 'allegiance'. Clearly, this is not the case. Rather, the words 'sound strange' to Rachel, and the first day of her delirium is occupied with 'try[ing] to remember how the lines [of the song] went' (383): 'the effort worried her because the adjectives persisted in getting in to the wrong places' (384). Syntax has become unstable, but Rachel retains a grasp on the sound and rhythm of Milton's verse (rather, perhaps, it retains a grasp on her). Woolf represents Rachel's illness in further images of rhythmic disturbance and silence: the violent 'pulse' of her headache signals the start of her fever (382), whilst its progression is marked by the sudden cessation of 'the song that someone was singing in the garden' (383) and her increasing isolation from the 'sounds' of the 'outer world' (384). There are several reasons why Milton's words may be 'painful' (the drowning of the young virgin Sabrina, for instance, prefigures the aquatic imagery of Rachel's own death) but the allusions to Rachel's 'pulse', and the repetitive echoing of 'listen', suggests that it is the regularity of this rhythm that is problematic. Milton's 'song' appears not only affective but also sinister, a disturbing antithesis to the beneficial 'musical' and literary metres sketched in 'Street Music'.

When Rachel's illness is in its final stages, repetitive poetic metre again provides a painful and unwelcome intrusion into the characters' subjectivities. Ridley quotes Charles Kingsley's 'A New Forest Ballad' (1847); as with *Comus*, the choice of text prefigures the sudden death of a youth and Ridley quotes the lines immediately before the murders occur. As the narrator describes Ridley's behaviour, their voice anticipates the internal rhymes, alliteration and repetition of Kingsley's ballad, highlighting the marked, repetitive rhythm of his text:

the sound of Ridley's song and the beat of his pacing worked into the minds of Terence and St John all the morning as a half-comprehended refrain.

They wrestled up, they wrestled down,
They wrestled sore and still:
The fiend who blinds the eyes of men,
That night he had his will.

Like stags full spent, among the bent
They dropped awhile to rest—

‘Oh, it’s intolerable!’ Hirst exclaimed, and then checked himself, as if it were a breach of their agreement. (408)

Terence and St John are disturbed not only by the subject of the poem (which they only ‘half-comprehend’) but also by its repetitive ballad metre—it is the ‘sound’ of Kingsley’s text and the ‘beat’ of Ridley’s walk that distress them. The regular ‘beat’ of his ‘pacing’ recalls the marching of Gibbon’s prose and that of the armies in ‘Street Music’—another indication that this is a rhythmic model antithetical to the ‘break[ing]’ and ‘tumb[ling]’ rhythms of modern writing.³⁴ Later the same day, a similar experience occurs when Ridley quotes Milton’s ‘Nativity Ode’ (1645). Like all the poems discussed so far, this is a poetic genre that is associated with or aspires to be sung as or represent music. The novel, in other words, quotes numerous texts that imitate or accompany music, and is especially attentive to the rhythmic qualities and effects of these ‘hybrid’ texts: throughout the novel Ridley is translating Pindar’s Odes, and in addition Woolf alludes to the poet-musician Sophocles and quotes part of the libretto of Wagner’s *Tristan* and Ariel’s song from *The Tempest*. Following her quotations from ballads, songs and ‘lays’ (in which Macaulay spoke ‘in the persons of ancient minstrels’),³⁵ Woolf quotes the ‘hymn’ from Milton’s ‘Ode’:

Ridley paced up and down the terrace repeating stanzas of a long poem, in a subdued but suddenly sonorous voice. Fragments of the poem were wafted in at the open window as he passed and repassed.

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their Temples dim,
With that twice batter’d God of Palestine
And mooned Astaroth [*sic*] —

The sound of these words were [*sic*] strangely discomfoting to both the young men, but they had to be borne. (409)

Not only is Woolf quoting a poetic genre associated with music and one imitative of ancient sung odes, but music is also an important subject of the ‘hymn’ in the stanzas preceding that which Ridley is reciting. The poet invites the ‘heavenly Muse’ to ‘join thy voice unto the angel choir’, and then evokes the celestial ‘music sweet’ of the nativity and of creation.³⁶ The delayed cadences of Milton’s angelic music suggest that celestial rhythm is sweetly un-emphatic,³⁷ but the metre of this section of the ode itself (stanza XXII) is more marked. Again, it is its ‘sound’ rather than the subject matter that disturbs the

listening men, though as the subject is the 'drear and dying sound' that accompanies the destruction of the old household deities this might also give them pause for thought.³⁸ Ridley himself appears almost to be trapped in the rhythm of Milton's poem: the poem's narrative trajectory has been interrupted as he 'repeat[s] stanzas', his oscillation between a soft and 'sonorous' voice mimicking the ode's dramatic contrasts of stasis and turbulence, silence and song. In this, as in so many other passages, the narrator, like the characters, is arguably more interested in the rhythmic and aural qualities than the 'meaning' of poetry. Every example of poetry associated with extreme and painful experiences is a 'musical' genre — one that aspires to evoke or would be accompanied by music. 'Street Music' may have invited the modern writer of poetry and prose to return to 'ancient' metres and to musical rhythms, but the examples quoted in *The Voyage Out* seem instead to represent 'degenerate' 'allegiance[s]' of musical and literary rhythm. These songs, odes and ballads are the antithesis of the varied, individualized rhythms that Woolf associates with modern writing; furthermore, in these quotations, music has a formal, rather than a metaphorical, function and one tied to particular literary genres and conventions. For the twentieth-century writer who must 'invent' as well as 'remember' rhythm, Gibbon's prose and the metric traditions of English poetry are problematic, if enticing, models, represented as repetitive and deathly.³⁹

The soporific or disturbing effects of poetic metre and prose rhythm are also attributed to public rhetoric and rhythmic speech in the novel.⁴⁰ Spoken and literary rhythms are thus associated with atypical, often extreme, emotional states — illness, distress, grief, day dreaming, and falling in love;⁴¹ it is at these moments that Woolf's characters are most sensitive to rhythm, and rhythm creates or exacerbates these states. Thus, rhythm is repeatedly figured as being not only between media, but also between 'types of experience'.⁴² In contrast to the allusions to literary rhythm, however, the novel represents musical rhythm in much more benign terms. There are several references to the music that Rachel is playing or studying (Bach fugues, late Beethoven sonatas, unspecified 'early music' and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*), but the longest passage about music concerns the dance at the centre of the novel. This is, furthermore, the only point at which the narrator comments on musical rhythm. The inviting, inclusive effects of the waltz are repeatedly emphasised: the 'old Spaniard' 'fiddled so as to make a tortoise waltz' (167); 'first one couple, then another' join 'the triumphant swing of the waltz' until the 'rhythmic swish of the

dancers sounded like a swirling pool' (169); and Rachel and Terence find 'the swing of the dancers and the lilt of the music' 'irresistible' (175). The scene is one of integration and sensuality, a rare moment in which the distinct social groups at the hotel mingle and in which the previously isolated, even solipsistic, Rachel takes a prominent part, first as a dancer then a player. When Rachel takes over from the professional trio, her rhythmic sense allows her to create an innovative performance combining art music, anonymous folk songs and dances:

As very soon she had played the only pieces of dance music she could remember, she went on to play an air from a sonata by Mozart.

'But that's not a dance,' said someone pausing by the piano.

'It is,' she replied, emphatically nodding her head. 'Invent the steps.' Sure of her melody she marked the rhythm boldly so as to simplify the way. Helen caught the idea; seized Miss Allan by the arm, and whirled round the room (. . .). Once their feet fell in with the rhythm they showed a complete lack of self-consciousness. From Mozart Rachel passed without stopping to old English hunting songs, carols, and hymn tunes, for, as she had observed, any good tune, with a little management, became a tune one could dance to. By degrees every person in the room was tripping and turning in pairs or alone. (. . .)

'Now for the great round dance!' Hewet shouted. Instantly a gigantic circle was formed, the dancers holding hands (. . .). (185–6)

It is striking that in a novel so explicitly concerned with writing and with literary-musical relations, the only unequivocally liberating and benign image of rhythm occurs not in connection with literature or even words but with music. This scene provides an alternative rhythmic model to the predominantly male literary canon in the novel and it is one that depicts new versions of old rhythms: Rachel plays old repertoire in a novel way, unconventionally stressing the rhythm of the Mozart sonata. Musical rhythm is remembered and reinvented, just like the dancers' steps. Unlike the disturbing or ambivalent effects of regular poetic metre and Gibbon's prose, the new waltz rhythm stimulates the performer and audience's inventiveness, producing a sense of equitable community.⁴³ Rachel draws on but 'manage[s]', or reinvents, the canon. The scene emphasizes idiosyncrasy and improvisation; it anticipates, that is, Peter Dayan's observation that 'belief in art' relies on belief in 'individuality, that constant difference' that necessarily 'escapes analysis'.⁴⁴ In this scene, fresh rhythm seems to signify creativity or art itself, as it does in Woolf's letters with which we began. The scene literalizes the vision of 'danc[ing]' and 'circl[ing]', 'invent[ing]' and 'remember[ing]' envisaged in 'Street Music'; we

might read it, therefore, as a fictional realization of the argument of the essay — as a displaced image of the beneficial effects for artist and aesthetes of experimental, musically-inspired literary rhythm, where music is synonymous with the new and with that which escapes analysis.

Clearly, there is a strong case for reading Woolf's choice of authors and texts in *The Voyage Out* as part of a critique of a patriarchal canon and the privileged masculine education system that undoubtedly disadvantages Rachel. Woolf's careful non-gendering of rhythm in 'Street Music' modulates into a more explicit exploration of gendered literary rhythms in the novel, anticipating her statement in *A Room of One's Own* that '[t]he weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike [a woman writer's] for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully.'⁴⁵ Woolf's attention to the gendering of rhythm is only part of the story, however. The novel and 'Street Music' also illustrate rhythm's force as a metaphor for writing or creativity itself, a force recalled in Woolf's later letters. All these texts assert the centrality of rhythm to the composition and appreciation of literature. Woolf's first novel draws on 'Street Music's' vision of regular metre as a socially controlling force, but it has become more negative, its effects distressing and de-humanizing. Both texts represent the dual force of rhythm, which is both liberating and oppressive, and in *The Voyage Out* this duality has become more polarised. Rhythm may be suspect in its anti-individualism — it regiments, it makes people fall in line, whether of dance or battle, it forces its listeners into 'obedience' — but it also represents the very force of art. As 'Street Music' and *The Voyage Out* uneasily acknowledge, this force works by subjecting us to its rhythm, whether the rhythm of Milton's verse, street musicians, or Rachel's piano playing. Whether we feel that as an enchantment and an elevation or as an ensnarement and an alienation depends on our own highly individualised conditions and experience — on gender, sexuality and education, for example. *The Voyage Out* also makes the difficulty — Woolf's own difficulty — of imagining and defining a contemporary rhythmic model of writing an implicit subject of the text itself. As she would later famously write to Smyth: 'though the rhythmical is more natural to me than the narrative, it is completely opposed to the tradition of fiction and I am casting about all the time for some rope to throw the reader'.⁴⁶ Woolf's conceptions of positive literary rhythm suggest that it necessarily falls outside critical discourse and canonical conventions in a way that the regular metre of Kingsley, for example, does not. Rather than explicitly articulating a single

theory of rhythm, Woolf's ambivalent images 'set [rhythm] working' as a process. Ideal, literary rhythm is thus, for Woolf, literally 'ecstatic' — always outside or beyond what can be rationally and critically known.

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank my co-contributors, especially Peter Dayan and David Evans, for their stimulating comments on this essay; their ideas have been invaluable.
- 2 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975–80), III, 247 and IV, 303. Hereafter *Letters*.
- 3 This reflects, of course, the particularly problematic application of this term to prose writing, where it may refer to local details of syntax ('style') or larger organising structures of extended narratives. Tellingly, a recent student handbook of literary terms defines rhythm only as a property of poetry and Angela Leighton recently observed, '[r]hythm is not a literary critical word' — although, as she elegantly demonstrates, its critical imprecision is precisely the point. See X. J. Kennedy, Dana Gioia and Mark Bauerlein, *Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory*, 2nd edition (n.p., Pearson, 2009) and 'Pater's Music', *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 14:2 (Fall, 2005), 67–79 (72). There was, nonetheless, considerable contemporary interest in this topic, from Abram Lipsky's *Rhythm as a Distinguishing Characteristic of Prose Style* (1907), George Saintsbury's *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (1912), and Albert C. Clark's *Prose Rhythm in English* (1913) to, famously, E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). The journal *Rhythm* was published in London between 1911 and 1913. Woolf often uses the term with reference to style, although a statement such as 'I am writing [*The Waves*] to a rhythm and not to a plot' (*Letters*, IV, 204) may suggest, as Kate Flint implies, that rhythm also plays a part in the structure of the novel (Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, edited by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 1992/2000), xxii).
- 4 *Letters*, IV, 303.
- 5 Woolf uses many images of the writer as a rider, for example: 'it was [the woman writer's] trial to take her fence without looking to right or to left.' ('A Room of One's Own', in *A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas*, edited by Michèle Barrett (London, Penguin, 1993), 85.) Given that the letter was written during the typescript revisions of *The Waves*, however, it is possible that there is also a submerged allusion to waves ('white horses') here.
- 6 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979–1985), V, 339.
- 7 I do not intend to reassert conventional genre hierarchies here; rather, rhythm plays a part in Woolf's redefinition of 'the literary'. See, for example,

'Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), in which Woolf describes rhythm as 'the most profound and primitive of instincts (of the poet)' and recommends that the modern poet attend to everyday urban rhythms: 'All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, open, and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts in another, until the taxis are dancing with the daffodils, until a whole has been made from all these separate fragments' (*The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume V: 1929–1932*, edited by Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth, 2009), 306–23 (315)).

- 8 Woolf evokes but inverts the classical association of Pegasus with poetic vision, which may implicitly position the poet as the rider mastering literary conventions in the act of composition. See, for example, Keats's account of 'the high / Imagination' on 'her steeds', and his attack, following Hazlitt, on Johnson and Pope's heroic couplets: 'They sway'd about upon a rocking horse, / And thought it Pegasus' ('Sleep and Poetry', in *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, edited by Jeffrey N. Cox (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2009), 62–3).
- 9 See for example Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 433–4.
- 10 See for example Sue Roe, *Writing and Gender: Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, and New York: St. Martin's, 1990), especially 22–3; Woolf, *The Waves*, edited by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 1992/2000), xxi–xxii, and Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 188–93. Garrett Stewart's dazzling chapter in *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) analyses the 'slowed phonic pulse' of *The Wave's* 'permissive' prose that 'lets in as lingual disruption the stray reverberations ordinarily contained or suppressed by the marshaled [*sic*] effects of literary style' (261).
- 11 See for example 'Music', *Virginia Woolf and the Arts: Selected Papers from the Sixth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), 158–74; Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'Virginia Woolf, Sound Technologies, and the New Aurality', in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, edited by Pamela L. Caughie (New York: Garland, 2000), 69–96; Rishona Zimring, 'Suggestions of Other Worlds: The Art of Sound in *The Years*', *Woolf Studies Annual* 8 (2002), 125–56; Elicia Clements, 'A Different Hearing: Voicing *Night and Day*', *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 11 (September 2002), 32–9; Elicia Clements, 'Transforming Musical Sounds into Words: Narrative Method in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*', *Narrative* 13:2 (May 2005), 160–81; Angela Frattarola, 'Listening for "Found Sound" Samples in the Novels of Virginia Woolf', *Woolf Studies Annual* 11 (2005), 133–59; and Elicia Clements, 'Virginia Woolf, Ethel Smyth, and Music: Listening as a Productive Mode of Social Interaction', *College Literature* 32:3 (Summer 2005), 51–71.

- 12 'Winged Phrases' (1919) refers to Mallarmé in a discussion of George Moore, and 'On Being Ill' (1926) alludes in passing to Mallarmé and Rimbaud. See Elizabeth Steele, *Virginia Woolf's Literary Sources and Allusions: A Guide to the Essays* (New York and London: Garland, 1983), 269 and 196. See also *Letters*, II, 565 and V, 387, 432, 437, and 452.
- 13 'I think the translations are extremely interesting—also very difficult. The difficulty may be partly that I've left my Mallarmé in London, and thus can't compare them with the French. But I've no doubt at all that they're very good, and give one the same strange feeling as he does. We are inclined to think notes essential, and also that a few pages by you on Mallarmé would make all the difference, and be of the greatest interest' (*Letters*, II, 439).
- 14 *Letters*, VI, 84. She continued: 'its [*sic*] a fascinating book—and Roger's case about Mallarmé seems to me proved. I shall read it carefully; now I've only dipped.' Woolf owned a copy of Fry's translation and Mallarmé, *Poésies*, 4th edition (Paris: Nouvelle revue française, 1913) (*The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-title Catalogue*, edited by Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic, introduction by Diane F. Gillespie (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2003), 145). In her biography of Fry (1940), Woolf writes of Fry sharing the 'dangerous delight' of translation with his visitors, and notes his/their attention to the sound of Mallarmé's poems: 'if it was impossible to find the exact sense, let alone the exact sound, Mallarmé, intoned in Roger Fry's deep and resonant voice, filled the dining-room with magnificent reverberations' (Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (London: Vintage, 2003), 239. See also 288).
- 15 Louise A. DeSalvo, *Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 3. DeSalvo proposes composition had begun by early 1908.
- 16 *The Voyage Out*, edited by Lorna Sage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4–6. Henceforth cited parenthetically.
- 17 This device recurs: the opening passage about the Ambroses is echoed at the end of the novel when Mrs Flushing weeps over Rachel's death, un-consoled by her husband (418).
- 18 *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume I: 1904–1912*, edited by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth, 1986/1995), 27–32. Henceforth cited parenthetically.
- 19 One significant exception is Anna Snaith's plenary lecture, 'The Years, Street Music and Acoustic Space', at the International Virginia Woolf conference, Fordham University, New York, June 2009. I am very grateful to Anna Snaith for her generosity in sharing this work and for her helpful comments on this essay.
- 20 *A Room of One's Own*, 87.
- 21 *Letters*, I, 190 and 180.

- 22 See Garrett Stewart, who describes 'phonic' language, following Kristeva, as 'not necessarily a gendered phenomenon', but instead 'a polymorphous eroticism of the voice' (*Reading Voices*, 278).
- 23 See also Woolf's 1903 diary account 'A Dance in Queens Gate', in Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897–1909*, edited by Mitchell A. Leaska (San Diego, CA, Harvest and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 164–7.
- 24 *Letters*, I, 88.
- 25 Snaith, however, persuasively places the essay in the context of xenophobic and snobbish English attacks on street musicians; if the essay is read as a direct response to hostile contemporary discourses about street musicians, the tone — and Woolf's championing of 'the poor' — appear less ironic.
- 26 See Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce, and Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 27 The *OED* attributes the first use of this term to 'On Ancient Greek Rhythm and Metre' (1864), in *Essays Philological and Critical Collected from the Papers of James Hadley* (London: Macmillan, 1873), 95.
- 28 See 'On Not Knowing Greek' (1925), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume IV: 1925–1928*, edited by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth, 1994/2002), 38–53. The opening sentence states 'we do not know how the words sounded' (38); see also 43 and 48. There is an important argument to be made about Woolf's more precise conceptions and use of Apolline and Dionysian rhythms in 'Street Music' and *The Voyage Out*, though this lies outside my attention to Woolf's metaphorical deployment of rhythm. I am very grateful to Jim Stewart for sharing his work on this subject with me.
- 29 Cf. Peter Dayan's account of unheard yet 'remembered' music in Proust, in *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 80–2.
- 30 *A Room of One's Own*, 69. Furthermore, 'the glory which [Rachel] had perceived at first [in Gibbon] had faded, and, read as she would, she could not grasp the rhythm' (226).
- 31 Cf. Pater's statement in 'The School of Giorgione', that 'true poetical quality' 'comes of an inventive handling of rhythmical language', cited in Leighton, 73, and Vernon Lee's adoption of the term in *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (1923). For Pater's influence on Woolf (though with no discussion of rhythm), see Perry Meisel, *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), and for a suggestive analysis of Pater's rhythmic prose see Leighton.
- 32 'A Masque', l. 853, in John Milton, *Odes, Pastorals, Masques*, edited by J. B. Broadbent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 152. Woolf read the parts of the Lady and Sabrina in an amateur performance of the masque around early 1908. See Lee, 252.

- 33 See Milton, 152, note.
- 34 See Helen Abbott's observations elsewhere in this volume on regular rhythm and walking.
- 35 Lord Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome with 'Ivry' and 'The Armada'* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), 24.
- 36 John Milton, 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', ll. 15, 27 and 93 (*Odes, Pastorals, Masques*, 15, 16 and 19).
- 37 'The air . . . / With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close', 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', ll. 99–100 (19).
- 38 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', l. 193 (24).
- 39 Sue Roe proposes that, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Woolf represents poetic metre as an 'illusion', 'a structure for experience which comes fully formed' (Roe, 69). The repeated images of Mr Ramsay's pacing and declamation also, famously, recall Woolf's father Leslie Stephen. Similarly, St John's play is implicitly characterised as mechanical or schematic when Rachel admires the 'skill of his rhythms and the variety of his adjectives' (260), and his lack of rhythmic sensibility is underscored at the dance when Rachel's 'good ear for rhythm' is 'incompatible' with his 'anatomy of a waltz' (170).
- 40 Helen echoes St John's words, for example, 'rhythmically and absent-mindedly' (230), while Susan Warrington's 'voice proceeded rhythmically as if checking the list' when she lists her domestic obligations and activities, 'in a mild ecstasy of satisfaction with her life and her own nature' (304). Rachel's abrupt rejection of Christianity, which follows her perception that the 'swing' of rhetoric prevents her from 'listen[ing] critically', is prompted by her sensitivity to musical rhythm: 'Such was the discomfort she felt when forced to sit through an unsatisfactory piece of music badly played. Tantalized, enraged by the clumsy insensitiveness of the conductor, who put the stress on the wrong places, and annoyed by the vast flock of the audience tamely praising and acquiescing without knowing or caring, so she was now tantalized and enraged' (264).
- 41 See for example 210–11, where Terence shouts 'nonsense' about Rachel.
- 42 See the Introduction to this volume, [150].
- 43 Compare the repetitive rhythm of the waltz in *The Years*: 'The waltz music took the words "calling and answering each other" and flung them out; but as it repeated the same rhythm again and again, it coarsened them, it destroyed them. The dance music interfered with everything. At first exciting, then it became boring and finally intolerable' (*The Years*, edited by Hermione Lee, with notes by Sue Asbee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992/2000), 129).
- 44 Dayan, 73.
- 45 *A Room of One's Own*, 69.
- 46 *Letters*, IV, 204.